



# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dorothy Tillman

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Dorothy Tillman
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Tillman,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 5, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:59:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights activist and city alderman Dorothy Tillman (1947 - ) started her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement at the age of sixteen as a trainee and a field staff organizer for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Tillman is a reparations activist and former Chicago alderman. Tillman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 5, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_178
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist and former city alderman Dorothy Wright Tillman was born on May 12, 1947 in Montgomery, Alabama, and joined the Civil Rights Movement at the age of sixteen.

As a trainee and a field staff organizer with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) she fought for equality and political consciousness. She helped Dr. King organize in Chicago, where she met her future husband and father of her children, Jimmy Lee Tillman. She also participated in the march on the Edmund-Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. This march, later known as Bloody Sunday, was a turning point in the battle to insure the right to vote for African American citizens.

Tillman and her husband Jimmy moved to San Francisco soon after they were married, where she successfully mobilized residents in her public housing community in a battle for local public transportation. After the family moved back to Chicago, Tillman organized a group of concerned parents and fought for quality education in their community. She founded the Parent Equalizers of Chicago, with over 300 schools participating. This set the groundwork for school reform in Chicago.

In 1985, Tillman became the first woman to serve as alderman of Chicago's Third Ward. As a major political figure in Chicago, she has been highly involved in numerous community-building activities, including projects related to issues of inner-city education, housing and homelessness. Tillman has also been an influential player in the movement for slave reparations. She has received numerous awards and recognition for her local, national and global activism and has been featured in various books and television features.

Dorothy Tillman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 5, 2002.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dorothy Tillman was conducted by Adele Hodge on September 5, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and city alderman Dorothy Tillman (1947 - ) started her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement at the age of sixteen as a trainee and a field staff organizer for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Tillman is a reparations activist and former Chicago alderman.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Tillman, Dorothy

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dorothy Tillman--Interviews

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Women city council members--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American women civil rights workers--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Southern Christian Leadership Conference

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Chicago (Ill.)

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers

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PoliticalMakers

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## **Administrative Information**

### **Custodial History**

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### **Preferred Citation**

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Tillman, September 5, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/25/2011 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## **Other Finding Aid**

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage, September 5, 2002

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Tillman, Section A2002\_178\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:53  
2002/09/05

Dorothy Tillman begins the interview by discussing her family background. She states that she was very close to her grandmother and her great grandmother, and she describes herself as a daddy's girl. She talks about the first time she heard Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak as well as her family's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. She recalls her experiences in elementary and high school, noting that the majority of her teachers were dedicated to the Civil Rights Movement, and encouraged the students and their families to participate. Tillman feels that African American schools were better before they were integrated because the teachers were more dedicated to the children then they are now. She also notes the supportive community of her childhood neighborhood and the willingness of people to help each other.

African American families--Alabama.

African American students--Education (elementary)--Alabama.

African American students--Education (secondary)--Alabama.

Segregation--Alabama--1930-1950.

Civil rights movement--Alabama--Montgomery--History--20th century.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Tillman, Section A2002\_178\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:15  
2002/09/05

Dorothy Tillman discusses her life as a student leader in the Civil Rights Movement in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. As a member of SCLC, she studied under Dr. James Bevel and was part of the direct action team. Tillman remembers participating in the march in Selma, Alabama, where the police broke "protocol" began beating the marchers as soon as they arrived at the bridge. She also recalls working in Chicago with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and how unwelcoming the African American leaders in the city were to the movement. In this interview, she also talks about the sights, smells and sounds that remind her of her childhood.

Civil rights movement--Alabama--Selma--History--20th century.

African Americans--Crimes against.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Selma-Montgomery Rights March, 1965.

African Americans--Civil rights--Alabama--Selma--History--20th century.

Civil rights movements--Illinois--Chicago.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Tillman, Section A2002\_178\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:14  
2002/09/05

Dorothy Tillman continues her discussion about the SCLC's work in Chicago, Illinois and describes the freedom house she lived in on West Monroe Avenue in Chicago. There were numerous activist organizations during the 1960s and 1970s, and without their work, the movement would not have been successful. She remembers that Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was friends with Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad, and understood that they were all working towards the same goal. She also compares and contrasts the different type of

racism in the North and the South. Tillman also talks about campaigning for alderman, her experiences in City Hall, the movement that elected Harold Washington and how hats became her trademark.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Mayors--Illinois--Chicago--Election.

African Americans--Crimes against.

Civil rights movements--Illinois--Chicago.

Civil rights movement--History--20th century.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference--History.

Chicago (Ill.)--Politics and government.

Hats.

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Tillman, Section A2002\_178\_001\_004, TRT: 0:26:58  
2002/09/05

Dorothy Tillman concludes the interview by discussing the steps she has made to advance the reparations movement. It has taken so long for the reparations movement to become mainstream because that the African American community was divided on the issue. She also points out that the academic community has constant discussions about the issue of slavery. She would like her legacy to be that she cared for her people. She also feels that motherhood has been her greatest accomplishment. She concludes the interview by narrating some photographs.

African Americans--Reparations.

Compensation (Law)--United States.

African Americans--Civil rights.

African Americans--Reparations.